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FM AMCONSUL LAGOS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8824
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA PRIORITY 8644
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 1222
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW PRIORITY 0308
RUEHVB/AMEMBASSY ZAGREB PRIORITY 0009
RUEHCD/AMCONSUL CIUDAD JUAREZ PRIORITY 0288
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 0287
RUEHSO/AMCONSUL SAO PAULO PRIORITY 0280
RULSDMK/DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAHL/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH AFB UK PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 LAGOS 000307

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - HANDLE ACCORDINGLY
SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W, INR/AA, DS/IP/AF, DS/ICI/PII, DS/DSS/OSAC
ZAGREB FOR AMBASSADOR BRADTKE
WARSAW FOR LISA PIASCIK
CIUDAD JUAREZ FOR DONNA BLAIR
ISTANBUL FOR TASHAWNA SMITH
SAO PAULO FOR ANDREW WITHERSPOON
DOE FOR GPERSON, CAROLYN GAY
TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS, SRENENDER, DFIELDS
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS
STATE PASS USTR FOR ASST USTR FLISER
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD
STATE PASS OPIC FOR ZHAN AND MSTUCKART
STATE PASS TDA FOR NCABOT
STATE PASS EXIM FOR JRICHTER
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/02/2017
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [EPET](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: SITREP 2: COMMANDER AFRICA AND MCGUYVER MAY BE RESPONSIBLE

REF: A. LAGOS 303

[1](#)B. 06 LAGOS 1419

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Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In addition to American citizen John Stapleton, Italian nationals Raffele Pascariello, Alfonso Frawza, Ignazio Gugliotta, Mario Celetano and Croatian national Juricha Ruic were abducted May 1 from a ship owned by a supply company working for Chevron Nigeria Limited (CNL). Chevron Chairman and Managing Director Fred Nelson, told consulate staff that CNL sources indicated the kidnapping was likely perpetrated by Bayelsa-based militant leader Commander Africa and Joshua McGuyver, once affiliated with but now at odds with militant leader Tom Polo. After overcoming initial difficulty in acquiring contact information, Stapleton's next of kin was contacted. End Summary.

Six Expatriate Hostages Identified

¶2. (SBU) American citizen John Stapleton, Italian nationals Raffele Pascsariello, Alfonso Frawza, Ignazio Gugliota, Mario Celetano and Croatian national Juricha Ruic were kidnapped early morning on May 1, off the shore of Bayelsa State. Stapleton had been on rotational duty with CNL for over seven years and is an Asset Manager. He was assigned to Chevron's Funiwa platform up until a day prior to the kidnapping. Ironically CNL transferred him to the ship after receiving credible threats targeting the Funiwa platform.

Injured Personnel Receive Medical Treatment

¶3. (C) In a meeting with Legatt and Regional Security Officer on May 1, Chairman and Managing Director of Chevron Nigeria Limited (CNL) Fred Nelson confirmed two GON naval ratings officers were killed in the incident. Nine other people (five GON naval officers and four Chevron contractors, all Nigerian nationals) sustained non-fatal injuries and were taken to Warri for medical treatment. According to CNL, there were 22 expatriates, including another American, onboard the attacked vessel.

Kidnappers May Be Commander Africa/Joshua McGuyver

¶4. (C) Nelson said local contacts indicate the kidnapping was likely perpetrated by Commander Africa and Joshua McGuyver. Neither man is from the local community, nor does Chevron believe they have the community's support. Both men previously broke away from Tom Polo's militant group. (REF B)

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Chevron,s information suggests these individuals undertook the kidnapping to get funds to establish a new camp. (Note: Earlier information from a Chevron security source indicated the Ezetu militants led by Commander Ebikabowei (possibly Ebidabowei) were the attackers. Commander Ebikabowei,s camp consists of two long houses near the Ezetu 2 Chevron host community in Bayelsa. The leader of nearly 60 militants, Commander Ebikabowei is believed to control 29 speed boats, 11 of which have double engines and three machine guns. End Note.)

¶5. (SBU) An online statement purportedly by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) was issued May 1, stating "MEND" disapproves of outgoing President Obasanjo's regime and warning President and Vice President-elect Umaru Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan that the Niger Delta issue must be addressed during their administration. The statement claims the hostages would be released unconditionally on May 30, 2007, as long as neither oil companies nor the Bayelsa state government offer ransom for the hostages' release.

AMCIT Contact Difficult to Track; Notification Imminent

¶6. (C) American Citizen Services (ACS) had difficulty obtaining current next of kin contact information for John Stapleton, delaying notification. The FBI and our consular section have notified Stapleton's ex-wife, Barbara Stapleton, of the incident.

Comment

¶7. (C) We do not definitively know the culprits; however, it seems this kidnapping was not spurred by local community grievances. Thus, to understand the motivation behind this

kidnapping would require a glimpse into the murky world and mind-sets of Delta militants. The most obvious factor in any kidnapping is the issue of ransom. However, this may not be the only or even the primary factor in this instance. There is an ongoing feud between different personalities in the militant world for the important but unofficial title of leader of the Ijaw militants and also who is the authentic MEND. We have heard that Tom Polo has gained concessions from the Delta State government that have kept Delta State relatively free of militant activity for some time. In fact, a statement issued from Warri and attributed to MEND endorsed the recent local and national elections. It is extraordinary that a militant group would make such an overture unless something was gotten in return.

18. (C) In its most recent statement, MEND indicated it would not release the hostages until after April 29, when the current government leaves office. This statement most likely emanates from the Bayelsa-based Commander Africa, Joshua

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McGuyver, or even the more shadowy Henry Okah who probably lives in the militant/criminal nether reaches of Port Harcourt. To the extent that this kidnapping is a play in the leadership struggle among the militant groups is the extent to which this hostage-taking could be more complicated and perhaps more protracted than others. End Comment.
BROWNE